

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DURBAN 448

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, SF

SUBJ: SOUTH AFRICAN UNREST: WHY NATAL IS QUIET

REF: DURBAN 427 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: EVENTS OF PAST THREE MONTHS IN SOUTH AFRICA HAVE
SEEN RECURRING PATTERN OF VIOLENCE AND UNREST IN TRANSVAAL
AND CAPE WHEREAS IN NATAL NUMBER OF INCIDENTS HAS BEEN RELATIVE-
LY SMALL AND LOSS OF LIFE VIRTUALLY NIL.
JQLE NO ONE IS

PREPARED CATEGORICALLY TO STATE WHY THIS HAS BEEN SO, CON1
SENSUS CENTERS ON FACT THAT BLACKS OF NATAL/KWAZULU ARE
HOMOGENOUS (ZULUS, HAVE AN IDENTIFIED LEADER (BUTHELEZI)
WHO HAS YET TO SANCTION VIOLENCE, AND EXIST IN RELATIVELY
LESS DEGRADING CIRCUMSTANCES THAN BLACKS IN SWETO OR
COLOREDS IN CAPE. SUPPORTING REASONS ARE THAT NUMBER AND
LOCATIONS OF STUDENTS AND HEM GERS LEND THEMSELVES LESS TO
VIOLENCE, AND THAT SAG PRE-EMPTIVE MEASURES IN NATAL ARE KNOWN
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TO BE SEVERE. BITTERNESS OF SA BLACKS ELSEWHERE NEVERTHELESS

IS SHARED BY THOSE IN NATAL. WHETHER AREA CAN REMAIN PERMENENTLY QUIET IS DOUBTFUL. END SUMMARY.

2. POST HAS ATTEMPTED FOR LAST SEVERAL WEEKS TO DEVELOP CLEAR ASSISSMENT OF WHY NATAL AND ADJACENT KWAZULUNLBME LAND HAVE REMAINEE SO RELATIVELY QUIET WHILE OTHER AREAS OF SOUTH AFRICA ARE EXPERIENCING SO MUCH UNREST AND VIOLENCE. NATAL DID EXPERIENCE A BEGINNING OF SERIOUS INCIDENTS AT TIME OF SOWETO I (LATE JUNE), CULMINATING IN BURNING AND CLOSURE OF ZULULAND UNIVERSITY. SINCE THEN INCIDENTS HAVE BEEN COMPARATIVELY MINOR AND LOSS OF LIFE VIRTUALLY NIL. WHILE NO DEFINITIVE REASON FOR THIS SITUATION HAS EMERGED, CONSULTATION WITH NUMEROUS SOURCES HAS PRODUCED FOLLOWING CONSENSUSNON FACTORS PROBABLY CONTRIBUTING:

A. BLACK POPULATION OF NATAL IS RELATIVELY HOMOGENOUS GROU (ZULUS) WITH STILL-CLOSE BONDS TO THEIR TRADITIONAL CULTURE. THOUGH EXPOSED TO URBAN/INDUSTRIAL INFLUENCES, ESPECIALLY AROUND DURBAN, ZULUS EXIST IN CLOSER RELATIONSHIP TO THEIR FAMILIES AND THEIR FAMILIES' SOCIAL CUSTOMS THAN DO YOUNG BLACKS IN OWETO. DEGREE OF AWARENESS AND REACTION RE SA INJUSTICES IS LESS ADVANCED AMONG YOUNG YOUNG ZULUS, PARTLY FOR THIS REASON. IN UMLAZI AND KWA MASHU TOWNSHIPS NEAR DURBAN, ROLE OF MOTHERS HAS BEEN NOTED IN KEEPING CHILDREN "IN LINE". NUMBER OF TEENAGE TOWNSHIP CHILDREN ALSO IS SOMEWHAT LESS SINCE MANY ARE RAISED IN KWA ZULU KRAALS TO ENSURE THEY ABSORB LRADITIONAL UPBRINGING.

B. WHEREAS QUALITY OF LIFE IS DEGRADING IN SWETO AND PARTS OF CAPE, IT IS MUCH LESS SO IN NATAL. NATAL CLIMATE IS TEMPERATEWN TOWNSHIP STREETS MOSTLY LIGHTED AND TREE-LINED. IN BOTH UMLAZI AND KWA MASHU, RESIDENTS HAVE LONG ENTERTAINED HOPE OF TENURE AS TOWNSHIPS COME UNDER KWAZULU GOVERNMENT. (30 YEAR LEASES HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE IN UMLAZI FOR SOME TIME.) THUS, MISERY OF LIVING IS RELATIVELY LESS A FACTOR AMONG TOWNSHIP-DWELLING ZULUS.

C. SAG REACTION AGAINST VIOLENCE IN NATAL IS SEVERE, POSSIBLY MORE SO THAN IS KNOWN. LOCAL THEORY IS THAT WHILE SAG IS CONCERNED WITH VIOLENCE ELSEWHERE, IT GENUINELY FEARS SERIOUS
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VIOLENCE IN NATAL BASED ON HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE DEALING WITH ZULU NATION IN LAST CENTURY'S WARS. POLICE SURVEILLANCE, INTELLIGENCE AND REACTION CAPABILITY IS THUS VERY WELL DEVELOPED IN NATAL. POST HAS RECEIVED REPORTS OF DAILY "PRE-EMPTIVE" ARRESTS OF SIZEABLE NUMBERS (300-400) TEENAGERS IN DURBAN'S TOWNSHIPS; RELEASED NEXT DAY, TEENAGERS NEVERTHELESS LEARN THAT POLICE MEAN BUSINESS. FURTHER EXAMPLE IS UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND WHICH HAS NOT BEEN PERMITTED TO RE-OPEN ALTHOUGH SCHOOLS IN OTHER

AREAS HAVE BEEN. THERE IS ALSO CONSIDERABLE EVIDENCE THAT IN-
CIPIENT INCIDENTS ARE WITHHELD OR CENSORED FROM LOCAL PRESS TO
PREVENT BUILD-UP OF BLACK PUBLIC FEELING. FEELING IS THAT
THOUGH NOT MUCH MAY BE HAPPENING, TIGHT "CLAMP" NEVERTHELESS
HAS BEEN APPLIED IN NATAL.

D. LAST REASON, PERHAPS MOST SIGNIFICANT, IS THAT ZULUS AS A
NATION HAVE IN PAST TRADITIONALLY BEEN RESPONSIVE TO A SINGLE
LEADER, USUALLY THEIR KING. AT PRESENT THEY HAVE AT THEIR DIS-
POSITION A STRONG AND GENERALLY ACCLAIMED LEADER, CHIEF GATSHA
BUTHELEZI, WHO SO FAR HAS ESCHEWED VIOLENCE ANDN
CRITICIZED THOSE WHO ENGAGE INIT. BUTHELEZI IN PAST SEVERAL
MONTHS HAS INCREASINGLY CRITICIZED SAG POLICY AND POINTED TO
LIMITS IN BLACK PATIENCE, AND VNKSQRI
NEVITABILTY OF CHANGE.
THESE EXPRESSIONS APPEAR TO COINCIDE, WITH CURRENT ASPIRATIONS
AND OUTLOOK OF A MAJORITY OF ZULUS, TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY
ARE STILL WILLING TO FOLLOW HIS ADVICE AND ABSTAIN FROM VIOLENCE,
FOR THE TIME BEING.

3. DURBAN/NATAL QUIET IS SOMETHING OF UN ANOMALY LOOKING BACK
TO EVENTS OF 1972-4 WHEN LABOR SCENE WAS FAR FROM QUIET AND AREA
GAINED REPUTATION FOR BEING IN THE FOREFRONT OF WORKER ACTIVITY.
SHORT BUS DRIVERS' STRIKE RECENTLY (REFTEL) FELL FAR SHORT
OF TRADITION IN THIS SENSE (AGAIN, PROMPT POLICE REPRESSION
WAS A FACTOR). NEVERTHELESS, THE BITTERNESS EXPRZ
POST'S BLACK CONTACTS AGAINST THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAMS
AND POLICIES IS NO LESS DEEP THEN ELSEWHERE. ZULUS HAVE RE-
PUTATION FOR ONLY BEING GOADED SO FAR, THEN REACTING EN MASSE
WHEN LEADERSH
P GIVES SIGNAL. UNLESS SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS CAN
BE MADE IN ALLEVIATING SITUATION OF SA BLACKS, IT IS DOUBTFUL
WHETHER COMBINATION OF BUTHELEZI'S RELATIVELY BENIGN LEADERSHIP
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AND OTHER FACTORS CITED ABOVE CAN PERMANENTLY STEM TIDE OF BLACK
RESENTMENT IN NATAL AND KWAZULU.
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